

## **ANNEX I: PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**General:** Oil and hazardous substance spills generate a great deal of public attention and media coverage, particularly if a spill is large or the substance spilled is extremely hazardous. This attention, reflecting legitimate public concern, may be local, statewide, or even national or international in scope.

Public affairs specialists or information officers keep the public and the news media informed about the facts and current situation of an incident and of the activities of the response effort and the agencies and officials involved. The Public Information Officer (PIO) of the Unified Command's Incident Command System organization serves as the lead manager for all spill-related public information activities conducted on behalf of the Unified Command or an On-Scene Coordinator (OSC). Additional information on the role of the PIO is provided in Appendix 1, Tab A.

Under the direction of the State OSC, the ADEC Public Information Officer serves as the lead manager for all spill-related public information activities that fall under State jurisdiction and will maintain a State public information office, as needed.

In the event of a major incident, the Unified Command in consultation with the PIO may choose to establish a Joint Information Center where public affairs professionals from organizations involved in incident management activities can co-locate to perform critical emergency information, crisis communications, and public affairs functions. Explanations and guidance for a Joint Information Center appear below in Appendix 1, Tab B.

The following appendices provide general guidance regarding public affairs and media relations during spill response operations. The **Resources Section** of each subarea contingency plan provides a media listing for use during oil and hazardous substance release contingencies in that particular subarea.

## APPENDIX I – PIO and JIC

### TAB A – PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

The **Public Information Officer** (PIO) is the communications coordinator, and often the spokesperson for the agency or organization they represent. The PIO is responsible for developing and releasing information about the incident to the news media, to incident personnel, and to other appropriate agencies and organizations. PIOs handle organizational functions, including media, community, industry, governmental, tribal, and interest-group relations. They do more than “tell their organization’s story.” They must understand the attitudes and concerns of the community, public interest groups, and other responding agencies and establish and maintain cooperative relationships with them and with representatives from print and broadcast journalism.

The PIO has three principal responsibilities:

1. Gather incident data. This involves understanding how an ICS/Unified Command response operation functions, then developing an effective method for obtaining up-to-date information from appropriate ICS Sections.
2. Analyze public perceptions of the response. This involves employing techniques for obtaining community feedback to provide response agencies with insight into community information needs, their expectations for the role to be played by the response agencies, and the lessons to be learned from specific response efforts.
3. Inform the public. That is, to serve as the source of accurate and comprehensive information about the incident and the response to a specific set of audiences.

The PIO drafts press releases and contacts people in the media who might print or broadcast material or information. The PIO must show creativity, initiative, and good judgment and have the ability to communicate thoughts clearly and simply. The PIO can operate from an office or from the field. During an incident, the PIO serves under the Unified Command and often can be identified by a helmet or vest with the letters "PIO" on it.

In response to a spill incident, as a member of the Unified Command Staff, the PIO will seek to perform the following:

- Obtain briefing from the incident commander.
- Prepare initial information summary, obtain Unified Command approval, and release for dissemination as soon as possible after arrival.
- In consultation with the Unified Command, establish a Joint Information Center, if warranted; manage the activated Joint Information Center.
- Arrange for necessary work space, materials, telephones and staffing.
- Observe constraints on the release of information imposed by the Unified Command.
- Release news to media and post information in command post and other appropriate locations.
- Ensure a consistent message is offered in all press releases, fact sheets, interviews and other public information forums.

- Attend all pertinent meetings to update information releases and situation reports.
- Screen visiting journalists and VIPs and arrange escorting when appropriate.
- Respond to special requests for information.
- Organize opportunities for media interviews, site visits, etc. during incident.
- Establish a press area, if deemed necessary, distribute passes, and ensure periodic contact with the media in the press area, using established time intervals, if applicable.
- Supervise the conduct of any outside news media, responding only with those details of the situation as authorized by the Unified Command. Establish the “ground rules” that are determined necessary by the incident commander given the seriousness of the situation.
- Respond to all telephone inquiries from news media, local residents and other in a timely manner.
- Standardize all forms of new releases and reports.
- Maintain a written log of all information received from the Unified Command and relayed or released on their authorization.
- Prepare a final written news release for distribution to the media with approval of the Unified Command.

## **TAB B – JOINT INFORMATION CENTER**

### **Section I: Joint Information Center Description**

During a major oil spill where media activity is expected to last several days, the Unified Command should task the PIO with establishing a Joint Information Center to coordinate the public affairs activities of participating agencies and parties. A Joint Information Center (JIC) is a co-located group of representatives from local, state, federal and private organizations designated to handle public information needs during an incident or event. The JIC is designed to fit naturally into the Incident Command Structure and can be customized to reflect the size of the incident or event, expanding or contracting to meet the needs of the incident. Establishing a JIC under the Incident Command System is the most effective means of meeting information requirements and can make the difference between the public perceiving the incident to be under control or out of control.

Because of the critical nature of providing emergency information, time spent getting organized rather than responding at the time of an event can lead to confusion and a loss of public confidence. Through a JIC, agencies involved in a response can work in a cohesive manner, enabling them to “speak with one voice.” By maintaining a centralized communication facility, resources can be better managed and duplication of effort minimized. The use of a JIC allows for tracking and maintaining records and information more accurately—therefore, improving the ability to conduct post-incident assessments, which can be used to improve crisis communication and general response activities during future incidents. JIC personnel should wear either identifying clothing or badges so they are readily identifiable by responders and members of the media and the public.

The objectives of a JIC should include:

- Developing, recommending, and executing public information plans and strategies on behalf of the Unified Command.
- Gaining and maintaining public trust and confidence

- Being the first and best source of information.
- Gathering information about the crisis.
- Ensuring the timely and coordinated release of accurate information to the public by providing a single release point of information.
- Providing multiple phone lines for incoming calls, manned by knowledgeable individuals.
- Ensuring State and federal government public affairs representatives are available to the media.
- Issuing press releases to the media and providing copies to response officials.
- Scheduling and coordinating news conferences and media briefings.
- Providing the responsible party (spiller) an opportunity to coordinate their media efforts with those of the Federal and State On-Scene Coordinators.
- Developing and maintaining a Unified Command website on the Internet to keep the public informed on the status of response activities.
- Capturing images of the crisis in video and photos that can be used by the response organization as well as the media.
- Monitoring and measuring public perception of the incident.
- Informing the Unified Command of public reaction, attitude, and needs, and advising the UC concerning public affairs issues that could affect the response.
- Ensuring the various response agencies' information personnel work together to minimize conflict.
- Facilitating control of rumors.

When possible the JIC should be kept separate from the Command Center; this provides greater control of information flow without disrupting response operations. Equipment needs for the JIC will vary depending upon the size of the incident, but most always will include the acquisition of phone lines, fax machines, copiers, computers, and printers. The ten subareas within the State of Alaska may offer in their respective plans the specific logistical needs of the JIC for various spill scenarios.

## **Section II: Joint Information Center Planning Considerations**

The following list of questions provides a starting point in determining priorities in establishing a JIC and organizing the appropriate resources to fulfill those needs:

### **First Steps - Initial Phase**

#### **1. What is the status on the situation?**

Obtain a situational briefing and gather accurate information as such what happened, when, where, how, and who was involved/affected? Get as many specifics and details as possible

#### **2. How, where, and what resources are needed to establish a JIC?**

What type/size of a JIC will need to be established and where will it be located? What staffing, equipment, supplies and other resources will be needed to effectively establish and run the JIC?

### **3. Who needs to be involved in the JIC?**

Who are the key responding agencies? How quickly can they send a representative to participate and provide input on public communication decisions?

### **4. What are the initial priorities and objectives for the JIC?**

What are the initial priorities and objectives in responding to the event and how will they be accomplished and who needs to be involved?

### **5. Which JIC functions will need to be activated?**

What functions and units should be activated? Do units need to be physically located together or can they function virtually via phone/web/email? Determine the best way to organize the operations, then fill out the JIC organizational chart appropriately.

### **6. Are there gaps that need to be filled?**

What additional information must be gathered or verified, and what additional resources will be needed?

### **7. Who are the key audiences?**

Identify the key audiences that need to be communicated to: affected stakeholders, general public, key officials, and media? They should be communicated with regularly, so begin to set up a system to do that.

### **8. What are the key messages to be communicated?**

Identify no more than three key messages and determine which messages relate to which audiences best. What are the risks and the actions needed that need to be communicated about?

### **9. Determine if there are any issues of confidentiality due to HIPPA or criminal investigations related to the event.**

The members of the media often have a problem with confidentiality. But when it comes to medical or criminal information there are things that cannot be legally disclosed. Explain this. Use good judgment.

## **Second Steps - Operational Phase**

### **1. What are the Media Relations Objectives?**

Determine media relations objectives and top priorities, and assign a lead.

### **2. What are the Research /Writing Objectives?**

Determine content objectives and priorities; assign a lead.

### **3. What are the Special Project Objectives?**

Determine special projects objectives and priorities are and assign a lead.

### **4. Are there any new or changing priorities?**

If there are changing or new priorities, what needs to be readjusted to meet those needs?

### **5. What information has changed or needs to be updated?**

Are there rumors and misinformation that need to be addressed? Let the news media know if there are corrections to previously released information. If new or changed information arrives, let the media and other key stakeholders know.

**6. Who are the subject matter experts?**

What internal resources/expertise can be called upon?

**7. What's working and what isn't working?**

Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the JIC structure and work units to determine if any changes need to be made. Take note of challenges, issues, and successes for after-action reports.

**8. What additional resources are needed to meet additional or increased demands?**

If additional resources are needed, can they be acquired or must reassignments be made to the current structure to meet increased demands?

**Third Steps- Demobilization Phase**

**1. What key issues are still outstanding and need to be resolved?**

Are there any outstanding issues that need to be addressed? Which issues need to be immediately resolved and which ones can they be addressed at a later on the after-action plan?

**2. Do you anticipate any post-event media activity?**

Assess public communication needs during a prolonged event and identify what resources can be deactivated and which ones need to remain operational.

**3. What follow-up communications need to be made?**

Plan for updates or follow up communications and identify target audiences.

**4. Which units can be deactivated and which units need to stay operational?**

Determine which units can be deactivation and which can not. Develop a phase-out plan.

**JIC Equipment and Supplies Considerations**

**1. Will the JIC be set up as a physical organization/ location or as a virtual JIC?**

First determine the set up for the JIC, whether that means physically working together in one location or working independently from separate offices.

**2. How many tables, chairs and desks/work stations will be needed for the JIC?**

If you are setting up a physical JIC, what is the best way to organize the room and its functional units? Consider who needs access to what equipment, and which work units should be near each other.

**3. What communication systems will be needed for the JIC?**

How many computers, laptops, printers, phones, faxes, and copiers will be need, including other operational equipment, such as projectors, white boards, etc.?

**4. What office supplies will you need?**

What basic supplies will JIC staff need – notepad, message pads, pens/pencils, markers, flip charts, staplers, clips, phone books, maps, etc.?

**5. What technological equipment or technologies will be needed for the JIC?**

What type of technologies will be necessary to enable the JIC to work more efficiently: email set-up, fax-blast systems, shared network drives, websites, electronic or virtual communication systems?

## APPENDIX II – GUIDANCE for PUBLIC and MEDIA RELATIONS

### TAB A – GENERAL GUIDANCE

**1. Staff and Resources:** Experienced crisis managers know that when public information officers are needed, the need can be critical, and the Unified Command's or the OSC's effectiveness with the media and public is often in direct proportion to the PIO's experience and training in complex environmental emergencies. Effective communication with the public is indispensable to a successful spill response.

Arriving at a spill site, the information officer must ensure that an **officer/recorder** is assigned from the professional spill response staff to assist in recording and transmitting written information. The staff person is responsible for writing a "spill bulletin" summarizing salient facts and information about the incident. The bulletin is transmitted, on a frequent basis and usually by Fax, to ADEC's Central Office in Juneau, the Governor's Office, communities, Native groups, resource organizations, the media, and federal agencies (as appropriate). The information contained in the bulletin will prove useful to the information officer, as well.

Additional information officers and clerical staff should be added to handle the increasing work load, as should photographic services, both still and video. Resources required for the spill information office include suitable maps of the impacted area, up-to-date media and community contact lists, dedicated phone lines, portable phones or beepers, if available, computers for all writers on staff, printers, a copier, and a fax machine. An advance agreement should be made with the Unified Command that photos and video footage shot for public information may be used for that purpose, without delay or restriction for legal reviews, except when such is warranted due to private property concerns.

**2. Staying Ahead of Changing Events:** One of the PIO's precepts for day-to-day effectiveness is to stay ahead of the "information curve." During a rapidly-changing emergency this will become one of his or her most exacting challenges. Not only must this person assemble information quickly, arrange interviews and assist reporters, but also must maintain close contact with the OSC and spill team members to anticipate, as much as possible, each major development in the spill response that will generate the next wave of public concern or media interest.

These events may come in the form of escalated response actions, the release of new water sample data or wildlife mortality figures, or a formal decision delivered by a member of the Unified Command or others serving in an official capacity. When events such as these can be anticipated, press information can be prepared to enable the OSC to maintain his/her role as the primary responsible spokesperson for the incident. Additionally, the information officer must work within media deadlines as much as possible. Much of the national news media is driven by East Coast deadlines, a full four hours ahead of Alaska, and this may require special attention. It is a simple fact that information delivered prior to deadlines will be more effectively reported by the press.

To stay ahead of changing events and to meet deadlines, the PIO must assimilate a mass of information by coordinating with local government officials and federal, State, and responsible party public information staff, attending staff meetings, reading situation reports, and asking many questions. All of this consumes time. Sufficient staff support and resources in the spill information office or Joint Information Center is essential for answering phones, writing and dispensing bulletins, and hosting the press. Obtaining staff resources is thus one of the PIO's first duties upon arrival at a spill site.

**3. Community Relations:** Providing information directly to members of the impacted community, free of the filtering and potentially distorting effect of the media is critical to public understanding of the incident response. Community relations may include scheduling of public meetings, preparing speeches, and coordinating public activities with public officials and protocol personnel.

In order to ensure that important constituencies are not overlooked or slighted during a major response, it is important that a Community Relations/Liaison Officer coordinate closely with the public affairs element. (Under no circumstances should community relations be a collateral duty of the media relations officer or the Joint Information Center during a major incident).

Additionally, the PIO should contact local government officials and have them offer information and comments on the situation. State, federal and local governments should coordinate their responses and press releases to the media.

**4. Internal Information:** Internal information is the process of properly informing internal staff of the status of all pertinent activities. By keeping staff apprised with information that is accurate and consistent, then efforts to properly inform the rest of the response community will be successful.

At a minimum, all personnel assigned to response duties should be provided with access to the daily fact sheet or any published spill bulletins prepared by the PIO or the JIC. This will help ensure a consistent and accurate flow of information.

## **TAB B – MEDIA INTERACTION**

**1. General:** The general public's opinion of response efforts are not always based upon what action has been taken, but upon what information they have received. Supplying information to the media is a critical component of spill response and is a primary function of the Unified Command. Early and accurate news releases serve to minimize public apprehension and to enhance their faith in the response community's ability to deal with oil and hazardous substance contingencies.

To ensure an accurate flow of information, a single point of contact or pool of public affairs personnel should be established for media relations. The number of people needed to respond to inquiries will vary depending on the size of the incident and the media interest involved. The Unified Command has many resources available to assist with the media. For small spills, the assistance of the U.S. Coast Guard Public Affairs Officer may be sufficient. For larger spills with more media interest, it may be necessary to seek assistance from other sources, such as the Coast Guard's Public Information Assist Team (PIAT), as well as State agency public information officers. **Appendix III, Tab D** of this annex provides all-purpose checklists to be used for public affairs procedures during pollution response operations.

The following general guidelines are also provided:

**a.** Fast and accurate information must be provided to protect public health, obtain public cooperation, and to assist in guarding against further environmental damage.

**b.** Clear communication by spill response authorities is essential for the delivery of accurate information to avert misinformation or rumors sometimes engendered by an emergency.

**c.** The OSC must immediately establish and maintain his/her position as chief articulator of an incident. As statutory guardian of public health and resources, it is the Federal and State OSC's role--not the role of the spiller or others--to deliver public statements regarding the effects of a spill, including evaluations of a spill's size, extent, nature, dangers to public health or resources, details of the response



plan, the OSCs' expectations for response plan implementation, degree of success or lack of success of a spill response, and the anticipated long-term effects of a spill.

**d.** When a spill occurs the OSC must immediately open communications with local government officials of affected communities, conveying facts needed by residents for their own response activities and protection of public health and resources. Initial phone calls to establish communication channels with local governments and appropriate organizations, such as fishermen and Native groups, should be followed by regular updates through spill bulletins, press releases, and briefings.

*Credibility with the press and the public is the best foundation for an effective public information effort, and the efficient delivery of accurate information is the key to credibility.*

**2. Media Access:** The question of media access to spill sites may arise during emergencies, usually because of one of three issues: safety; potential interference with response activities; or admission to private property.

In general, it should be the Unified Command's policy to allow free access for the media where public resources are concerned, with reasonable guidelines to protect personal safety and preclude interference with response activities. The PIO must work through and seek permission from the Incident Commander before allowing media access to the emergency scene.

If conditions will not accommodate crowds of reporters, "pool" reporting may be necessary on a temporary basis. In regard to private property (a spill, for instance, on the grounds of a privately-owned refinery or storage facility) reporters or their companies must negotiate their own access. The information officer should obtain permission and legal counsel before releasing photos or video footage on private property, both for purposes of conserving legal evidence and potential violation of owners' rights.

**3. The Daily Press Briefing:** Early morning is the best part of the day for the information officer to coordinate the day's press activities and ensure that everyone receives written information and background facts. During a significant spill with a rapidly developing situation and the presence of a large number of reporters, a briefing held daily at a pre-established time (8:00 am or 8:30 am is recommended) is one of the most useful means of delivering information. This is an opportunity for the OSC and other spokespersons to brief the press and answer their questions and for other key staff members to follow up with important data. For example, if applicable, an ADF&G representative may present information on wildlife and fisheries impacts, or public health authorities may offer their findings on contamination of local subsistence foods. It is the PIO's duty to work with the OSC to prioritize the information according to importance, point out backup factual material and other sources, provide written information for distribution, and conduct the press briefing.

These press briefings may relieve the OSC and other spokespersons of some of the pressure of interviews throughout the remainder of the day, as well as free reporters to proceed with field work. The early hour also means that East Coast deadlines can be met.

**4. News Releases, Fact Sheets, Background Papers:** News releases should be reserved for announcements of major decisions, policy changes, or new developments. They must report on items that are actually news, should summarize issues clearly, and provide quotes from decision-makers that encapsulate and clarify the Unified Command's position. Distribution should be to affected communities and all response agencies in addition to the media.

Fact sheets (see sample in Appendix V) should be prepared and updated regularly to present key data needed by the press or the public, such as amounts of oil or hazardous substance spilled or cleaned up,

wildlife mortalities, and number of personnel involved in the response. Background papers should be written to amplify and clarify complex issues and the Unified Command's related actions and policies.

Desktop publishing technology is best used in the public information office from the outset of the spill for rapid reproduction of documents that communicate effectively.

- 5. Spill Bulletin:** The spill bulletin, a simple but essential publication, can become a key vehicle for conveying information about the spill response. It can be produced up to several times daily by a liaison recorder, a staff member with technical spill and environmental expertise who works closely with both the information officer and the spill management team. The PIO or a liaison recorder keeps track of the changing status of the response and records the information in brief, summarized informational "bullets." The bulletin is faxed to communities, other response agencies, the Governor's Office, the ADEC Commissioner's office, appropriate federal agencies, and others who require the information. With Unified Command approval, the bulletin may also be made available to the media through the PIO.
- 6. Mapping:** Oil, chemicals, or toxic gases often present increasing dangers to resources and public health because of their tendency to move after being released into the environment. The location of the spill and the changes in location are thus essential pieces of information for local residents, communities and the media. The spill information office or the JIC should obtain maps from agency technical mapping teams and make them available on a continuing basis. These maps can be attached to fact sheets or spill bulletins, if they are produced.
- 7. Designation of Spokesperson:** The lead government officials or PIOs, whether federal, state or local, will be important media sources and should be prepared to answer questions on the location and severity of an incident and the type of response required to address the situation.

At the State level, the designated State spokesperson is normally the State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC). The person filling this role will articulate the State's key policy positions and hopefully provide continuity throughout the spill response. The spokesperson should have experience in media interviews and be capable of delivering clear and frequent explanations of the State's actions during a rapidly-changing emergency. Due to the workload and time constraints placed on the SOSC, the PIO will often be asked to serve as official spokesperson, addressing certain tasks and media/public engagements.

All information regarding State involvement at the spill site will be documented by staff to the SOSC either at the scene or through his/her regional office, and the SOSC or ADEC PIO will disseminate the information appropriate for release. For major incidents requiring participation of higher State executives, the ADEC division director or the ADEC Commissioner may be designated to make certain State policy announcements. The ADEC PIO will be designated by the SOSC, the responsible ADEC director, or the ADEC Commissioner. The PIO will work closely with the SOSC and ADEC Commissioner, reiterating the State's positions and policies, delivering them in writing or verbally to the news media and affected communities, and arranging appropriate interviews and press briefings to facilitate the flow of information. The PIO should contact the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (ADHSS) PIO and/or the Emergency Response Coordinator in the earliest stages of any incident that may impact public health. ADHSS will provide a flow of accurate and timely information to public health personnel in the field and will provide information on public health issues and policy to DEC's information officer.

Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Coast Guard or EPA, and local governments will have their respective spokespersons. The FOSC will usually fulfill this role for the federal government and will often be the point person for information on the overall spill response, yet the SOSC or ADEC PIO will remain the source for the State's position on human and environmental effects and State response activities.

The company responsible for the spill or the company's contractor may choose to inform the media of its actions in the spill response, but should defer to the SOSC and FOSC for statements about public health, dangers to resources, extent of the spill, or other issues within State or federal jurisdiction. Before releasing scientific data or other information that bear upon public concerns about the extent and nature of the spill, the spiller should first submit the information to the SOSC or FOSC for assessment of its scientific accuracy.

## **APPENDIX III – MEDIA LOGISTICS**

### **TAB A - LOGISTICAL CONCERNS FOR PRESS CONFERENCES**

Pollution incidents that generate significant media interest normally require press conferences or news briefs. These media gatherings provide an opportunity to film and ask questions of senior response officials. People arranging conferences and briefings should ensure that top officials are available and up-to-speed on any special interest areas. It is beneficial to provide a press release, statement, or press packet prior to conducting a press conference. The spokesperson(s) should approach the conference with a clear idea of the specific points to be discussed and anticipate questions that may be posed. Charts, diagrams and other visual aids serve to facilitate presentations and clarify response actions.

A schedule of the times and locations for press conferences should be published and made available to the media well in advance, whenever possible. This can be accomplished with a news advisory. It may be beneficial to conduct press conferences near the site of a pollution incident. This presents a challenging scenario to the PIO or other public affairs personnel.

Public buildings in the area that can handle the expected media representatives should be quickly identified. This may include local federal, state, or community facilities, fire stations, police stations, or other government buildings. One alternative is to conduct a conference or briefing on scene or alongside a mobile command post. On-scene conferences or briefings must be carefully coordinated to ensure efforts to control the spill are not disrupted. For press briefings, efforts should be made to find a location that provides convenient access for federal, State, and local officials and that is large enough to accommodate the anticipated number of media personnel.

Some members of the media will request access to the spill site for photo opportunities. Direct access to private property such as facilities, vessels, or barges will remain under the control of the owner. It may be advantageous to have a Coast Guard vessel available to tour the affected area from the waterside. When media interest exceeds the capacity of the Coast Guard vessel, it may be necessary to form a press pool; the selection of participants is best left to members of the media. The media may also obtain their own vessel or aircraft with which to view the spill site. They will continue to be governed by any Security or Safety Zone that is in effect, unless granted specific access by the appropriate authority.

Members of the media could also approach personnel at a spill site. If possible, they should be referred to the PIO, a Unified Command representative or to the Unified Command (in that order). Agency representatives on-scene may answer questions regarding their particular roles. The rule of thumb is, if it's your job, you can talk about it; if it's not, then refer them to whoever is responsible.

Accompanying a spill of significant interest will be an increasing demand for information from public officials. Federal and State Public Affairs personnel are also responsible for fielding political inquiries as directed by the Unified Command. They should also prepare briefing materials for elected or public officials who may request information about the incident.

## **TAB B - MEDIA CONTACTS**

### **Section I: Government Resources**

Each PIO will need to compile a media contact list. Figure 1, below, serves\_ as a form for creating a media contact list and a prompt to identify the points of contact, phone numbers and Fax numbers for wire services, television, radio, and newspapers.

**1. Federal Resources:** The US Coast Guard District Public Affairs Office is ready to assist an FOSC by providing Public Affairs Specialists for media liaison and photo documentation. This office should be contacted early as the primary source for public affairs assistance. A Coast Guard Public Information Assist Team (PIAT) is also available to FOSC's when additional personnel or expertise are required to accommodate the media. The PIAT is a specialized, self-contained, public affairs resource which is available through the National Response Center (800) 424-8802 or the National Strike Force Coordination Center at (919) 331-6000. In the event a Joint Information Center is established, the spiller should be encouraged to provide a spokesperson to the JIC to facilitate "one stop shopping" for the media.

#### **2. State Resources:**

**Governor's Office:** A spill of any significant magnitude in Alaska, especially if it has important implications for public health or the environment, will almost certainly generate contacts with the Office of the Governor from the media and members of the public, and the Governor will likely need to comment on the spill status and response. The ADEC State Public Information Officer for the spill must establish direct contact with the Governor's press secretary at the outset of a significant incident, provide a flow of accurate and timely information to the Governor's Office, and assist in coordination among the SOSOC, ADEC Commissioner, and the Governor for statements to the press. If a major spill occurs, the State PIO should coordinate the overall State approach to media relations with the Governor's press secretary. The press secretary will provide guidance on press issues within the Governor's purview.

**Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G):** The ADEC information officer should contact the chief of ADF&G's public communications section in the earliest stages of any incident that may impact the State's wildlife or fisheries. A close working relationship between the ADEC PIO and ADF&G spokespersons will enable ADF&G to deliver media information on the resources within its jurisdiction. In the event of a major incident, ADF&G should provide an information officer as part of the State's public information team to both share the work load and ensure accuracy of information on fish and wildlife resources and ADF&G policy.

**Department of Natural Resources (ADNR):** The ADNR public information staff likewise should be contacted in any incident in which State park lands or other State lands or resources under ADNR jurisdiction are affected. The ADNR agency representative will contact ADNR public information staff when State lands, waters or resources are involved in an incident.

**Department of Military and Veterans Affairs/Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (ADMVA/ADHSEM):** For participation under this Unified Plan, ADMVA/ADHSEM media contacts will be referred to the incident commander's media officer. If the spill response is part of a larger disaster, requiring the implementation of the State Emergency Operations Plan, then media contacts will be handled by the public information officials designated to act by that plan. If an emergency is declared, the DEC PIO should immediately establish contact with ADMVA/ADHSEM public information personnel for information exchange.

**Core Public Information Team:** When a spill occurs, the following agency individuals, as needed, will form a core group to serve as the nucleus of a State public information team: ADEC director of affected division; ADEC section chief or Area SOSOC; on-scene PIO; ADEC Commissioner's Office

PIO; Governor's press secretary; and information officers from ADF&G, ADHSEM, ADNR, and ADHSS.

## **Section II: Media Outlets**

**(See the Resources Section of the appropriate subarea contingency plan for a list of wire services, newspapers, and television and radio stations in the subarea.)**

**1. Wire Services:** The Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), and Reuters wire services are regularly among the first to be contacted with breaking news since these services provide electronic media and newspapers with immediate information. A PIO will be well-served to make early contact with the wire services.

**2. Television:** Apart from radio, TV is the most widespread news medium and, arguably, the most powerful due to its visual impact. It is the medium by which the greatest number of people will gain information about a significant spill and formulate their feelings. Therefore, this emotionally powerful medium can be a major influence on public opinion and a key to delivering the Federal/State and local position on the impact of a spill and how people and sensitive environmental and cultural areas are being protected from further damage.

The PIO should focus on using this medium in three ways:

- Facilitate TV interviews with the OSC or other appropriate spokespersons and cooperate with stations and networks for video crews to visit spill sites, accompanying them where possible, to obtain news footage in a manner that is safe and does not interfere with the spill response.
- For a large spill, immediately activate a professional video team to shoot broadcast-quality footage from the first days of the incident and use the material for the Unified Command's own video reports on the spill. For a small spill, request field personnel to record spill events and response operations with issued cameras.
- Use the video team's footage to produce video news releases on the most important issues and events of the spill and identify a distribution system to deliver these releases electronically to interested stations and networks. In addition, "B-roll" footage should be provided for stations to use in editing their own news pieces. The footage can be delivered statewide and nationally by satellite link. A private company may be contracted for production and editing, but the JIC may find it more expeditious to employ its own production personnel.

**3. Radio:** This medium, especially public radio with its well-developed statewide and national networks, plays a more significant role in Alaska news perhaps than in other states. With public radio stations in a number of communities and efficient networking by Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN), radio represents an aggressive and professional news capability. Radio should receive equal notification and information during a spill response.

**4. Newspapers:** Print journalism often provides more in-depth coverage than television or radio and is sometimes more closely perused by decision-makers, legislators, community officials and other opinion leaders. While TV is viscerally powerful, its images are more fleeting than stories and editorials appearing in print. Thus newspapers can have a longer-lasting effect, and, in a sense, newspapers write the "history" of an event -- at least in the public view.

## **APPENDIX IV – GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES/CHECKLISTS**

### **TAB A – STATE OF ALASKA GENERAL GUIDELINES**

No two emergencies are identical. Each event will challenge the public information officer's skills in communication, organization and diplomacy. This individual must design the best information response possible, flexibly and creatively, to meet the given situation. The following checklist, intended as an aid to the basics, is offered as a starting point:

#### **Pre-planning**

1. Maintain up-to-date information on the major facilities in the State. Include a file of relevant facts on the industries and the major environmental and public health resources near facilities.
2. Review major oil and hazardous substance transportation routes and examples of vessel and facility contingency plans.
3. At both the PIO's home and office, keep a kit with communications information for Alaska locales, including community and media contact lists.
4. Participate in spill drills.

#### **At the Scene**

1. Coordinate with the SOSC and spill response team.
2. Make all notifications as needed:
  - ADEC information officer in Commissioner's Office
  - Governor's Press Secretary
  - ADF&G Public Information Office and other State agencies as needed (ADNR, ADMVA/DES, ADHSS)
  - Coast Guard or EPA Press Officers; and
  - RP's press officer or press spokesperson
3. Identify Liaison Officer/Recorder and determine when first Spill Bulletin will be released.
4. Initiate first press release with basic facts on spill; distribute as soon as possible.
5. Identify additional staffing, office, and equipment needs, if any, and submit to SOSC or office administrator.
6. Open communication channels with local government officials of affected communities; assist SOSC in keeping local community leadership informed.
7. Log-in press calls, record names, phone and fax numbers of reporters.
8. Activate video and still photography team.
9. Arrange to obtain maps from mapping team, with regular updates.
10. Work with SOSC to set up first press briefing.
11. Attend key staff coordination and update meetings.
12. Identify where reporters and TV crews may go and, if necessary, assist them in getting there.

#### **News Briefings**

1. Coordinate with OSC: who will be spokesperson(s), subject matter to be covered, other state staff required, backup materials, time limit.
2. Develop list of probable questions for SOSC.
3. At beginning of briefing, introduce yourself and speakers, give titles and spelling of names, indicate subject matter to be covered.
4. Note or tape questions and answers for follow-up.

### **Type of Information for Release**

1. Names and contact phones to obtain information on the spill.
2. Exact location of the incident, including the proper name of the site, commercial entity name.
3. Time and date of incident.
4. Type of substance spilled, nature of incident (fire, explosion, oil spill, etc.), and size, and effects to date on humans or resources. For any casualties, withhold names pending notification of next-of-kin.
5. Actions taken or recommendations by the Unified Command for actions to respond to the incident. If appropriate, obtain quotes from the Unified Command officials regarding actions needed.
6. Resources in area that could be at further risk, including human risks, and information needed by the public for self-protection.
7. How the Unified Command is coordinating efforts with local communities and residents.

### **Precautions**

Information released publicly during an incident may be used in later litigation. When in doubt, secure advice from the legal authorities. In general, adhere to the following:

- Do not speculate about the facts. "I don't know but I'll find out" is sometimes the best answer.
- Do not make damage estimates in terms of dollars nor confirm estimates made by persons other than those serving in an official capacity in the spill response operation.
- Withhold names of casualties pending notification of next-of-kin.

### **After the Spill Response ...**

When the crisis has subsided and media interest abated, the incident commanders public information staff, and local government officials, as appropriate, should meet to evaluate their effectiveness with the media and the public.



## **TAB B – U.S. COAST GUARD CHECKLIST FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

- \_\_\_ 1. Designate an incident Public Affairs Officer. This person may change with time from a unit officer to a PIAT CWO to a District officer to a senior officer from another command. Make sure all PAs know who the PAO is and understand that the PAO reports to the OSC.
- \_\_\_ 2. Complete fact sheet (see Appendix V for sample) and prepare a 30-second media statement (about 150 words maximum).
- \_\_\_ 3. Record media statement on Voice-mail, record-a-phone or similar automatic message service so media can get updates.
- \_\_\_ 4. Use phone screening system (watchstanders, automated, etc.) to direct news media to prerecorded updates.
- \_\_\_ 5. Have three phone lines available for public affairs use: incoming (published), outgoing (unpublished), and a fax line.
- \_\_\_ 6. Contact district (District Public Affairs or DPA) at outset of any medium or larger spill to arrange for PA backup. Temporary Activity Duty (TAD) PAs may be used or referral of media calls to DPA or some variation.
- \_\_\_ 7. Contact NSFCC, PIAT to alert in case of any potential major incident (if not already done as part of #5 above). Note: FOSC may request PIAT assistance at any time regardless of spill size.
- \_\_\_ 8. Update fact sheet at least daily and fax or phone update to major media outlets.
- \_\_\_ 9. Schedule a media-availability meeting with the FOSC, at least daily when media interest is great (if unsure of necessity, ask reporters; they will tell you whether the story merits the meetings).
- \_\_\_ 10. The primary purpose of a news conference/media-availability meeting is to put forth the FOSC's assessment of the progress of the response. A secondary purpose is to answer media questions. Use the Fact Sheet (sample in **Appendix V**), as the primary tool for briefings.
- \_\_\_ 11. In major spills, designate a protocol office to handle VIP visitors. Do not assign this function to the PAO.
- \_\_\_ 12. In major spills of high interest, designate an FOSC aide. Access to the FOSC and the FOSC's time is critical in such incidents and must be scheduled carefully.
- \_\_\_ 13. Require the PAO to brief the FOSC each morning on the media coverage of the incident and the specific public affairs goals for the day. The FOSC should update the fact sheet at this time.
- \_\_\_ 14. Establish a Joint Information Center (normally dictated by the size of the incident.) Only the FOSC or the FOSC's spokesperson speaks for all agencies, but each agency can speak for itself.
- \_\_\_ 15. Maintain close contact with appropriate local government officials.

## **APPENDIX V – SAMPLES**

Tabs A through E provide the following:

- a form for listing media contacts,
- a sample fact sheet,
- an example of a Unified Command website home page,
- a sample press release, and
- a sample news advisory (TBD).

**TAB A – MEDIA CONTACT LIST FORM**

**MEDIA CONTACT LIST**

*POC*

*PHONE*

*FAX*

Associated Press: \_\_\_\_\_

United Press: \_\_\_\_\_

CNN: \_\_\_\_\_

Local Wires: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local TV: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local TV: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Radio: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Newspapers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## FACT SHEET



### Ninilchik River Sulfur Spill Ninilchik, Alaska

*Along the Sterling Highway, a container of sulfur fell off a transport truck and spilled along the bank into the Ninilchik River. The container held approximately 17 tons of sulfur*

#### Background

On Tuesday, September 16, 1997, a Lynden Transport truck traveling on the Sterling Highway transporting two containers of sulfur from the Tesoro Chemical Plant in Nikiski to Homer spilled one of the containers along the bank and into the Ninilchik River at the Ninilchik River Bridge.

The sulfur spilled down the bank and across the width of the river. The sulfur also settled a short distance downstream covering small portions of the river bed.

Two small areas of sulfur ignited and burned. Because burning sulfur may produce irritating or toxic sulfur dioxide gases, area residents were evacuated to nearby fair grounds as a safety precaution. The fires have been extinguished, and the residents have returned to their homes.

The product spilled is dried sulfur, a by-product of desulfurization of crude oil at the Tesoro Chemical Plant in Nikiski.

#### Spill Investigation Activities & Sampling

The Department of Environmental Conservation is working with the trucking company, the Department of Fish and Game, Tesoro, and the Department of Health and Social Services to determine what impacts, if any, may be associated with the release of the sulfur.

Field water chemistry examinations conducted by ADF&G, upstream and downstream of the spill site, show no change in pH, water conductivity, or oxygen levels. Also, benthic organisms, rainbow trout fry, and silver salmon fry were captured immediately below the spill site by ADF&G personnel and no visual adverse impacts to the organisms were noted.

#### Next Steps

Sulphur spilled onto the embankment has been picked up with a vacuum truck and shovels. The tentative plan for pickup of the product in the river is to remove the large chunks by hand and follow up with an underwater vacuum system using a hose and wand connected to centrifugal pumps. All of the sulfur may not be removed from the river bed in order to protect fish spawning areas.

#### *What is SULFUR?*

Elemental SULFUR is largely extracted from petroleum. It is also used as an ingredient in insecticides, over the counter skin medications, and soil stabilizers. Sulfur – in its elemental form – is an odorless, flammable, yellow, translucent solid. Sulfur makes up 15% of the inner core of the earth and 0.052% of the earth's crust. Traces of impurity may give off a rotten egg odor to the sulfur compound.

#### *What happens when it is spilled?*

Sulfur will not mix with water. So, when spilled onto soil, it cannot be transported downward into the ground water table, and when spilled into a water body, it is likely to thicken and sink to the bottom and not dissolve into the water. Sulfur is also oxidized by microbial species in soils and sediments. Plants are able to utilize the oxidized forms of sulfur.

#### *Potential Health Risks Examined*

Inhalation of sulfur dust can cause eye irritation, respiratory tract irritation, inflammation of the nasal mucosa and possibly increased nasal secretions. Sulfur is not particularly toxic when ingested. The major health risk in handling sulfur is ignition and the potential to produce toxic sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide gas.

#### *Ecological Risks*

Sulfur is a natural component of river water and sea water. In its sulfate state, it is present in sea water at about 2,700 parts per million (ppm) and at about 11 ppm in river water. Sulfur does not bioaccumulate or build up in fish, clams or oysters.

Sulfur is dangerous to aquatic life when extremely high concentrations are suspended into the water column. Low levels of sulfur settled into the sediment do not appear to be dangerous to the aquatic environment.

## Information about the Prevention and Emergency Response Program

DEC's Prevention and Emergency Response Program is responsible for all ADEC prevention and emergency response activities related to oil and hazardous substance releases statewide. Its objectives are to ensure the safety of all persons involved in an incident, and to protect the public health and the environment.

The Alaska Legislature created the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Response Fund to enable the state and local governments to cover the costs of oversight and cleanup. These costs are in turn recovered from the responsible party as mandated by state law.

### Additional information:

*For more information about the Niniichik River Sulfur Spill, please contact one of the following DEC staff:*

**Jane Smith**, (907) 555-7543  
email: jane.smith@alaska.gov

**John Doe**, (907) 555-7522  
email: john.doe@alaska.gov

fax: (907) 555-7648

*or write:*

**DEC PERP Program**  
**555 Cordova Street, 2nd floor**  
**Anchorage, AK 99501-2617**

## *Additional Human Health Toxicity*

Routes of Entry: inhalation, skin, eyes, ingestion.

### Non-Cancer Causing:

According to the National Toxicology Program (NTP), sulfur is not listed as a carcinogen (cancer causing agent).

### Acute (short term) Health Effects:

Over exposure can cause reddening of the eyes and skin. Inhalation of dusts can be irritating to the nose and throat.

### Chronic (long-term) Health Effects:

Prolonged skin contact can cause the development of allergic reactions.

### OSHA:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has not established a permissible exposure limit (PEL) for sulfur.

### ACGIH:

The ACGIH has not established a threshold limit value (TLV) for sulfur.

## *Additional Ecological Toxicity Information*


### Aquatic toxicity:

Freshwater toxicology of sulfur on fish is as follows:


- 16,000 ppm for 5 hr on goldfish resulted in 100% mortality under turbid water conditions;
- 10,000 ppm for 96 hr on mosquito fish resulted in adverse effects in turbid water conditions;
- 1,600 ppm for 3.5 to 5.25 hr on goldfish provide fatal under colloidal sulfur in tap water.
- 200,000 ppm for <1 hr on goldfish proved fatal under colloidal conditions.

*Note: colloidal conditions means that the sulfur was kept suspended in the water.*


## TAB C – EXAMPLE OF A UNIFIED COMMAND WEBSITE



U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
United States Coast Guard



Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation







### Unified Command: *M/V Selendang Ayu Grounding*

State of Alaska > DEC > SPAR > Prevention and Emergency Response Program> Incident Home

#### Spill Response Updates

updated 6/10/2008 -- [salvage operations, May 1](#)

>>View latest thumbnails

>>view all

- USCG Press Release (12/08/2006): Coast Guard, State Of Alaska, National Academies Of Science Discuss Aleutian Islands Risks
- Grounding of Malaysian-flag Bulk Carrier M/V Selendang Ayu on North Shore of Unalaska Island, Alaska, December 8, 2004. NTSB Report Number: MAB-06-01, adopted on 9/26/2006  
[Full Text | PDF Document]
- The Selendang Ayu Oil Spill: Lessons Learned, Proceedings from 2005 Aleutian Life Forum, Reid Brewer, Editor
- Unified Command Memo: Completion of Response and Stand Down
- Unified Command Memo: Final Status of Non-End Point Shoreline Segments
- Unified Command Press Release: Unified Command declares Selendang Ayu clean-up complete (June 23, 2006)
- Current Situation
  - Current Situation Report (added 6/26/2005) -- FINAL
  - Press Releases
  - Unified Command Stand Down Letter (added 9/30/2005)
  - Previous Situation Reports and Winter Ops Reports
- Wreck Removal Status, 6/12/2006 (PDF 16K)
- Current Incident Action Plan (06 June 2006 to Stand-Down, PDF 9.86MB, added 6/12/2006)
  - Previous Incident Action Plans
- Response Resumes Spring 2006: Unified Command Memo: Resumption of Selendang Ayu Response Operations (added 4/28/2006)
- Spring 2006 Operations Plan (9/30/2005, PDF 199K)  
Note: this document is referred to as "reference (a)" in the UC memo above.
- Waste Management Plan (05/02 PDF 4.82 MB)
- Spring-Summer 2005 Operations Plan (2/4, PDF 1.22MB)
- Lightering and Salvage (updated 2/11/2005)

- Shoreline Cleanup
  - Non- Endpoint Segments -- Scorecard (6/17/2006)
  - May 24, 2006 Public Presentation: Before and After Segment Comparison Photographs (prepared by Polaris Applied Sciences, PDF 4.25 MB)
  - Endpoint Status Maps (added 9/21/2005)
  - Oiled debris burns
  - Before and After Cleanup (updated 7/19/2005)
- Wildlife Recovery (updated 2/10)
- Shoreline Cleanup Assessment: Pre-Inspection Endpoint Assessment and Final Inspection (updated 8/10/2005)
- Soybean Information

#### Subsistence Information

- Health Consultation: Evaluation of Blue Mussel Samples Collected in May 2006, M/V Selendang Ayu Oil Spill, Unalaska, Alaska. February 11, 2008. US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (PDF 307K) ★
- Press Release: Subsistence foods near Selendang Ayu wreck sampled for contaminants (PDF 101 K)
- FACT SHEET: Subsistence Foods Consumption Safety (PDF 24K)
- M/V Selendang Ayu Oil Spill Unalaska, Alaska Public Health Evaluation of Subsistence Resources Collected During 2005, Final Report, April 18, 2006, Scott Arnold, Ph.D. (13 pgs, PDF 597K)
- Appendix A: Methods Used for Collection of Subsistence Fishery Samples and Survey of Subsistence Food Consumption (prepared by Polaris Applied Sciences, Inc., 9 pages, PDF 597K)
- Appendix B: Subsistence Tissue Data - Forensic Review (prepared by Environmental Forensics Practice, LLC, 3 pages, PDF 41K)
- Additional Reference Documents

#### Commercial Fisheries Information

- Fisheries Water Quality Sampling Program, Summary of Results (added 11/9/2005)
- ADF&G Announces Reopening of Commercial Fishing in Skan and Makushin Bays (10/6/2005, PDF 86K)
- Removal of ADEC Threatened Water Body Designation (added 10/3/2005, PDF 23K)
- An Overview of the Major Commercial Fisheries in the Unalaska Area that may be Impacted by the M/V Selendang Ayu Oil Spill, Report to Fisheries Work Group (April 15, 2005, PDF 2.05 MB)

## **TAB D – SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

### **DEC NEWS RELEASE**

**Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation**

**410 Willoughby Ave. Juneau, Alaska 99801-1795**

**Phone: (907) 465-5060 Fax: 465-5097**

**<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/home.htm>**

April 21, 2010

CONTACT:

John Doe, State On-Scene Coordinator

ADEC Anchorage, (907) 555-7522

Jane Smith, Information Officer

ADEC, Juneau, (907) 555-5060

### **PIPELINE SPILL GETS RESPONSE BY ALYESKA, ADEC, AND STATE-FEDERAL JOINT PIPELINE OFFICE**

Spill response personnel have formed an incident command system (ICS) in response to an underground spill at Pump Station 10 on the Alyeska Pipeline. The spill has caused manager-company Alyeska Pipeline Service Company to reduce the flow through the pipeline by approximately one-half (from 1.4 million barrels to 700,000 barrels per day) while excavation and repairs are made. The spill is located about 150 miles south of Fairbanks along the Richardson Highway.

It was reported that Alyeska maintenance personnel discovered the spill late Saturday. The company implemented an ICS to address the spill. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) personnel joined the ICS on-site at Pump Station 10 to monitor, assist and investigate the spill and response.

Alyeska Pipeline pumped crude oil from storage tanks at Pump Station 10 to make storage available in case the line needs to be evacuated for repairs.

The cause and volume of the spill were not known today, but Alyeska had pumped about 100 gallons from two metal culverts used for accessing flow transducers on the pipeline. The company estimated that crude oil is seeping into the culverts at a rate of about six to eight gallons per hour.

Alyeska organized four task forces to address the spill. They will excavate in the area around "check valve 92," excavate near the metal culvert pipes to locate the leading edge of the spill, establish a contaminated soil stockpile, and provide decontamination of field equipment.

DEC staff are monitoring initial response actions and reviewing cleanup plans, and will review a waste management plan for the response. DEC is working with Alyeska and with the State-Federal Joint Pipeline Office to respond to the spill.

**TAB E – SAMPLE NEWS ADVISORY**

*(To Be Developed)*